

CHAPTER XL

REFORMATION AND REVOLUTION IN THE NETHERLANDS— WILLIAM OF ORANGE AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST DESPOTISM.

AT this critical juncture neither the nobles nor the Protestants were united, and William found it impossible to unite either. Egmont and Horn drew back, and would not co-operate in William's plan of an armed league in defence of national rights against the coming Spanish tyranny. Calvinists and Lutherans refused to coalesce in the religious compromise which he urged. Nor would the Lutheran princes of Germany agree to an active alliance which did not include the supremacy of Lutheranism among its conditions. His overtures to the Huguenots and to Queen Elizabeth had no more promising results. The Calvinists formed the only party of action, but their efforts to meet betimes the danger of repression by armed resistance failed miserably. In the face of an impossible situation, for which his detractors, forgetting the horrors of over forty years of persecution, seek to make him responsible, he saw no expedient for the present but in exile. He refused to take an oath to serve the king in all things, without reservation or restriction, and resigned his seat in the Council and his governorship. After a last vain attempt at Willebroek to gain Egmont, whom he warned of his future fate, he joined the crowd of fugitives which was hieing across the Channel or the Rhine, and betook himself to Dillenburg, his old home in Nassau, in April 1567. In the same month Alva was already on the road from Spain to execute his mission of blood.

Alva came in August to supersede the duchess, and his coming was indeed that of the angel of death. Twenty-four thousand troops—ten thousand of them Spanish veterans—

accompanied him to do the implacable will of the tyrant and the bigot. He was amply furnished in addition with all the

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